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I had been screwing up my courage by dabbling in my mummy paint with the end of the brush I had chosen for the finishing touches to my picture, and now I stood motionless for a moment, gazing at my canvas and wondering vaguely why my hand, always so sure and steady at a crisis in my work, should tremble now. Pulling myself together with an effort, I touched the brush to the canvas just where the high light fell above the forehead upon the woman's hair.

"What—what has happened to you? Are you faint?"

From a great distance I heard Miss Manderson's voice, like one calling from the shore to a swimmer in great peril. I knew that I had stepped back from my easel and stood gazing at my canvas with eyes big with horror and amazement. I was transfixed by what I saw—the smooth, clear-cut, pallid face of a man about whose black hair was bound a narrow band intertwined with the gleaming coils of an asp. In his dark passionate eyes and round his thin proud lips played a mocking smile, a smile that suggested vengeance satisfied; cold, diabolical, terrifying.

Impulsively I pulled the curtain across the canvas, shutting out from sight the abhorrent evil thing that had destroyed my handiwork at the very moment of achievement.

"It's nothing, Miss Manderson" I faltered, approaching the dais unsteadily. "A sudden dizziness, that's all. The light—I—if—if you don't mind, we'll do no more work to-day."

She had stepped down from her chair and stood searching my face with sympathetic, questioning eyes.

"I'm to blame" she murmured, self-reproachfully. "Day after day I've kept you at your task in my impatient egotism, and now——"

Her words, unjust though they were to her, were sweet to me—too sweet—and with a mighty effort of the will I shut my ears to them.

"You'll go now, won't you?" I suggested, almost rudely. "If I need you again—and the chances are I sha'n't—I'll send for you."

"And my portrait?" she asked after a pause, during which I had kept my eyes stubbornly away from hers. "Am I to see it before I go?"

"Not if you would keep your vow, Miss Manderson.

My—my slight touch of vertigo leaves the picture still unfinished."

After her departure I closed the door to the painting-room, and lighting a cigar stretched myself at full length upon a Turkish divan in the ante-chamber. To me thus striving to calm my perturbed nerves came Brenton, breaking in upon my privacy with scant ceremony.

"Did it do the trick?" he asked abruptly, a suggestion of surprise in his sad eyes as he noted my indolence and the closed door of my studio. "Has Pharaoh saved your bacon, old man?"

"Sit down and smoke" I said gruffly. Then from the pocket of my jacket I took his tube of mummy and thrust it toward him.

"Take it" I said. "I'm through with it."

"You seem grateful" muttered Brenton satirically, as he scanned my averted face searchingly.

"Don't misunderstand me, my dear fellow" I remarked apologetically. "My gratitude to you is deep and lasting. But I sha'n't use your mummy on my portrait. I've touched the picture for the last time."

"You've left it as it was yesterday?" he queried, the artist in him shocked at my attitude toward the matter.

I paused a moment before answering his question.

"Yes" I replied, after a time. "It's the same as yesterday, and I'll never change it. What I ought to do with it is to turn it over to the police."

"H'm" mused Brenton, stroking his gray beard. "I don't understand you, old man. The police? What has happened to you? Yesterday, if I recall your words, you might have succumbed to the temptation to commit murder—in the name of Art. To-day, well, to-day you talk like a Philistine. I have it. You're in love!"

"Bah" I exclaimed testily. "Why do you prattle nonsense—at your age, Brenton? Matrimony—how many times have I heard you say it?—is not for the painter."

"No, matrimony is not for the painter" repeated my friend with strong emphasis. "But—my tube of mummy is."

I sat erect upon the divan and faced my tormentor into whose melancholy eyes had come the gleam of a tantalizing smile that gave the final filip to my waning self-control.

"Look here, Brenton" I cried hotly, "you may or may not comprehend me, but what I say is—damn your tube of mummy!"

Edward S. van Zile

REFLECTIONS OF A MURAL PAINTER

BY W. B. VAN INGEN

AS the shadows of life were lengthening across his pathway, an artist signed a canvas in these words: "Painted with his own hands at the age of seventy. By John La Farge."

It was a picture made for the walls of the Supreme Court in the beautiful State capitol at St. Paul, of Moses receiving the Tables of the Law on Mount Sinai. In the distance the aged leader of the tribes of Israel kneels with a humility that bespeaks the consciousness of being unworthy of receiving the

miraculous gift of God. The scene is on a mountain top; great clouds of smoke and fire suggest a convulsion of nature; but there is in the immediate surrounding of Moses a calm that seems to tell of the repose of Law and Justice. There are two other figures; they are in the foreground. One shrinks from the majesty of the Divine Revelation, the other indicates that there are some approaching who need to be warned that this is sacred ground.

If one may judge from the evidence the "Mass of

Bolsena" by Raphael was in La Farge's mind as he conceived the never-to-be-forgotten figure of Moses. The miracle of the Mass, the great humility of the servant of God as he receives the bread and wine which are flesh and blood are reproduced psychologically in the picture of the miracle of the reception of the Mosaic law. The great volcano of Mauna Loa in the Sandwich Islands furnished La Farge with suggestion for the wondrous scene in which the Tables of the Law were transferred to man.

One might say that La Farge had had a glimpse into the land of perfect law, into the mysteries beyond the tomb—that he was painting an epitome of his emotions as he realized the majesty of law in a world of apparent confusion. And perhaps the most wondrous part of the mental conception which has been thus so solemnly portrayed is the scene itself, not merely the personages that are but part of it. This conception of a picture as a scene in nature, rather than a group of figures against a landscape background, brings to mind some clarifying words of a very wise Japanese critic. Sei-Ichi Taki says: "What our art aims at in reproducing a scene of nature is, to evoke a recognition of the association ideas which arise in our hearts in the presence of such a scene."

My eyes have never beheld Mauna Loa, but I have stood with one foot down the crater of Vesuvius while shielding my head from the masses of falling lava; I have trod ground from which were everywhere issuing clouds of sulphurous smoke, and again and again have I felt the tremblings of the earthquake. I have stood on the great "Seven Province Pass" in the land of the Rising Sun and have seen the surrounding clouds conceal but to reveal the wonders that lay at my feet. I have stood thus in the presence of details of just such a scene as La Farge has evoked, and the associative ideas which have arisen there in my heart he has awakened as by the power of magic.

I am reminded here of a criticism, read years ago, of Dante's divine creation "The Inferno." We are told that, with all its surpassing wealth of imagination, each detail of the setting may be found in some specific landscape of Italy. Dante saw, his mind grasped its significance; he correlated that which we pass as blind; and from the retort of his mind there issued, as though set free by the fire of his emotion, the conceptions that evoke our admiration.

But, returning to our Japanese critic, he says that "Nature as it is perceived by us invariably presents itself, not in any single individual object but in the aggregation and continuity of many different objects." Yet in our overwhelming ignorance we of the Western world art apt to flatter ourselves that it is we who are lovers of nature, and that the Oriental but conventionalizes what he sees. It may be to our advantage, then, if for a moment we reflect on the words of a keen mind, superbly equipped to compare the Eastern way of seeing with the Western. Lafcadio Hearn says:

"We do not see Nature as the Oriental sees it and as his art proves he sees it. We see it less realistically; we know it less intimately, because, save through the lenses of the specialist, we contemplate it anthropomorphically."

A formidable word, this "anthropomorphically," but one whose dimensions need not bewilder us since it means merely "turned into the form of man." Man has become to us the measure of all things and Nature merely a background against which we see him. But "the lenses of the specialist" have clearly shown us that this view is distorted, that man is but a part of the profound scheme of things we call Nature. Summing up then, Hearn continues: "Thus out of simple human passion, through influences and transformations innumerable, we have evolved a cosmic emotion, a feminine pantheism."

Can there be any doubt that as artists we try to distort the eternal feminine into poses that shall represent all the associative ideas that awaken in our hearts? and can anything be further from Nature? See, on the other hand the marvelous perfection of the Eastern imagery of the futility of struggling against the forces of Nature—a wild animal, a tiger, a lion is represented struggling to free itself from the waterfall that carries it to destruction. Thus on his observations of Nature the contemplations of the Oriental are made real.

It may be asked whither travel these reflections? It is to the lessons of Dante, to those reëchoed by La Farge, to those we may learn from the Far East, and above all to the limitless possibilities suggested to us by the country in which we live. For here we may study Nature in all her moods, here we may see, as it were, the world in the making. Mountains that tell us the story of the flood, since they show us fossil fishes thousands of feet above the sea; layers of stone deposited by the waters in the dawn of days; forests destroyed by rock crumbled into earth, from which new forests have grown only to be submerged in newer earth from which other forests aspire to high heaven. Trees, whose gigantic size and fabulous age take us back to times before which history is dumb. A Niagara whose rushing waters have for thousands of years been cutting their way through limestone and shale and in whose path we may read, as in an open book, the way of the Hand of God. Embowered in flowers, we may wander in a valley cut from solid granite by delicate snowflakes multiplied into the resistless force of a glacier. We may explore a region composed of "thousands and tens of thousands of gorges," a façade a mile high, built of seven systems of rocks, seven chapters in the history of the earth!

There is no beginning, there is no end of the wonders that Nature shows us in our own country.

And we have a Geological Department at Washington that issues maps and descriptions, that struggles to learn and explain to us all that man knows of mother earth. We have a government, forty-eight of them, erecting buildings fabulous in number yet never sufficient for our needs. But when as artists we are called to embellish their walls we brush aside these wonders as of no importance though they are the very cause of our might and power, and turn for inspiration to the language used to express thought when allegory was a living thought. We look into a classical dictionary, learn the attributes of this goddess or that, engage a model, hand her the "properties" and proceed to show our ability with a paint brush. Then we complain that art is not appreciated, embosom our

unctuous conceit and lull ourselves with the morphine of "educating the public."

Are we not asking a people made of twentieth century flesh and blood to prostrate themselves before academic imitations of the past? Are we not convinced that as Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo were artists and great men, we, being artists, are great men? Are we not engaged in the futile effort of trying to make the clock run backward?

Yet Leonardo's eyes were not in the back of his head. "You will tell me" he says "that nature and the influence of the stars have formed these shelly forms in the mountains? Then show me a place in the mountains where the stars at the present day make shelly forms of different ages and of different species in the same place. And how with that will you explain the gravel which is hardened in stages at different heights in the mountains?"

Nor need we search through technical tomes to learn of our wonders. A few years ago a simple lover of plants was led gradually higher and higher until he lived on the mountain tops, until the glories of the glacier were as familiar to him as the grace of the gentian. And what artist but must stand uncovered before that altogether lovely soul we knew as John Muir? Who can read of his enchanted wanderings in our national parks without seeing festoons of majesty and loveliness adorning the façades of his own aspirations? Listen to his words on the "place of fountains where the greatest of American rivers take their rise":

The wildest geysers in the world, in bright triumphant bands, are dancing and singing in it, amid thousands of boiling springs, beautiful and awful, their basins arrayed in gorgeous colors like gigantic flowers, and hot paint pots, mud springs, mud volcanoes, mush and broth cauldrons whose contents are of every color and consistency, splash and heave and roar in bewildering abundance. In the adjacent mountains, beneath the living trees the edges of petrified forests are exposed to view, like specimens on the shelves of a museum, standing on ledges tier above tier where they grew, solemnly silent in rigid crystalline beauty after swaying in the winds thousands of centuries ago, opening marvellous views back into the years and climates and life of the past.

Then, continuing his revelations, his evokings of the association ideas which rise in our hearts in presence of such a scene:

Thus reviewing the eventful past, we see Nature working with enthusiasm like a man, blowing her volcanic gorges like a blacksmith blowing his smithy fires, shoving glaciers over the landscape like a carpenter shoving his planes, clearing, plowing, harrowing, irrigating, planting and sowing broadcast like a farmer and gardener, doing rough work and fine work, planting sequoias and pines, rose bushes and daisies; working in gems, filling every crack and hollow with them; distilling fine essences; painting plants and shells, clouds, mountains, all the earth and heavens, like an artist—ever working toward beauty, higher and higher. Where may the mind find more stimulating, quickening pasturage? A thousand Yellowstone wonders are calling. Look up and down and round about you! And a multitude of still, small voices may be heard directing you to look through all this transient shifting show of things called "substantial" into the truly substantial, spiritual world whose forms, flesh and wood, rock and water, air and sunshine, only veil and conceal, and to learn that here is heaven and the dwelling place of the angels.

True it is that lands other than ours tell the story of the ages, but 'tis equally true that lessons enforced by illustration from one's own land take on a meaning far more telling. Who can gainsay the

force of familiarity? And O, we have such need of learning! In the clash of faiths, the destructions of dogma, we must needs find some north star on which we may focus our mental sights. Something fixed, some permanency that lives and moves and has its being even as we. And some language that will express it clearly! Size, we know, is an element of grandeur. The canvas that is small carries with it an unescapable implication that the scene it represents is small, whereas the wall space that is noble, like the sonority of the voice of the orator or the rhythmic roll of verse, prepares our minds to receive the profound teachings of Nature's handiwork.

An artist can express himself only through the medium of his environment, namely, the natural scenery of his own land.

Where can these great spaces be found save in our public buildings? Where else can we avail ourselves of the grandeur of size? Where else can the story of our limitless wealth of nature be so brought home to us as in those monuments erected by us, for us? The phraseology of the Middle Ages was theological, to-day it is scientific; but has man changed? Is the thing behind the phrase aught but that it always was, that it always will be? We know that in times past men thought the wonders of the earth were the results of cataclysms; to-day we believe that time with infinite slowness supplies the force we thought had been momentous. But has the thing itself changed because our explanations of it have changed?

Listen to the words of Sir Charles Lyell, a man whose name is as enduring as are the very rocks whose language he knew so well: "To assume that the evidence of the beginning and end of so vast a scheme lies within the reach of our philosophical inquiries or even our speculations, appears to be inconsistent with a just estimate of the relations which subsist between the finite powers of man and the attributes of an Infinite and Eternal Being."

No, we can not hope to solve the riddle of the universe, but we can pass on the little candle lights that have guided our path, we can picture what our eyes have seen and our minds conceived in language that needs no help from the weakness we call allegory; we can use a language that appeals to the high and low, the rich, the poor, the educated and the uneducated. All mankind loves a picture and surely we are not apart from all mankind?

There is a building not made with hands, eternal in the heavens; we carry its counterpart in our minds and its walls are pictured with the tale of man's endeavor to wrest protection, sustenance and delight from Nature. And if we fear, always with eyes turned background, that modern science and art are in eternal conflict, may we not learn a lesson from a poet whose eyes were open to the wonders of to-day, across whose vision passed no obscuring clouds of yesterday; who, recognizing the value of hexameter to the Greeks, threw to the winds its barbarities in English, who rhymed in measures that he who runs may read? . . .

I held it truth, with him who sings
To one clear harp in divers tones,
That men may rise on stepping-stones
Of their dead selves to higher things.

W. B. van Ingen